

The Ettin's Guidwyfe that Greined for Paerls

Ae tyme, langsyne, in a land ferr the the north o here, leaved a brow lad bi name o Callum. He wes a fisherman an whyles a hunter, for ahint the land the war green bens an derk forests, an forenent it, lay the wattirs o the mukkil sie, wyde as the world. Gray thay war in the wunter days, an gurlie, wi the whyte faem clashin agin the craigs o the forelaund, an bringin owre the siller saunds. But i the bricht simmer days, the wattirs war lown, blue an siller, an thay keltert in the gowden licht o the sun.

Callum bade bi the wattirsyde, an he haed a wee fisherman's butt an ben aw til himsell, an a boat ti fish frae. He haed a lass, tae, cawed Catriona, an he loued hir weill. He ettilt for ti mairrie Catriona juist as suin as he haed gethert a poutchfu siller coins frae sellin the fish he catcht. An Callum kent he wes chancie, for Catriona wesna juist a bonnie lassie, she coud spin forby, better nor oniebodie in aw the land, an she wes aye the eydent ane. Awbodie wes gled for ti buy hir wark, for thay kent that whitever she turnt hir haud til, it wad be weill duin. Sae the perr o thaim wrocht gledlie, kennin weill that suin aneuch thay wad be mairrit, an levee thegither in the whyte houss whaur Callum nou bade his lane.

But Ai deirie me, whit soud befaw but that an ettin soud cum i the mirk, doun frae the hie bens an throu the wuids? An whit soud he dae but lift Catriona, an whusk hir awa til his keep, that she nicht spin for naebodie but hissell? He did juist that—an a sicht waur. For he gart hir spin an mak claes for him, no frae woo, but frae nettils, an thaim stingin hir haunds sair. An whit wi the ettin cummin i the derk o the nicht, naebodie kent whaur Catriona haed gaen, or whitfor.

Lang, lang did Callum hunt for his bonnie lassie, but the war naither sicht nor wurd o hir oniewhaur. Or ae day, in the thick derk forest neirhaund the mukkil bens, whit soud he finnd but an aigil? Nou Callum lykit weill aw the wyld craeturs o the forest, an tho whyles, he buid ti hunt for his maet, yit he aye taen tent ti kill swyth an siccar. An than onlie in haurd tymes whan he docht na fish in the roch wattir. An sae it haed cum about that on a day langsyne, he hae fund an aigil wi its fuit sair mittilt.

Callum haed fed an luikit eftir the mukkil burd throu nichts an throu days or its sair fuit haeled, an the aigil haed lain quaet anaith his haunds or the tyme cam whan it coud fend for itsell again. An sae it wes, that this verra aigil haed cum forrit for ti help Callum, as he himsell haed gien it help an beild langsyne.

Ye maunna forget that in thae ferrawa days, the war yit glaumerie in the world. Syne the beiss an the burds coud speik, sae thay coud, whan it wes needfu. An Callum shuirlye wantit glaumerie this day, wi him seekin his bonnie Catriona.

The mukkil burd luikit weill at Callum an he said, doucelyke:

“Ye hae want o me the-day, sae Ah hae cum, ma brither. Yeir bonnie lassie is hauden, sae she is, bi the ettin in the keep at the tap o the heichest ben in the haill kintrie. But she is gey disjaskit bi nou, for the ettin hae stown hir sae that she might spin for him, an aw he gies hir for daein it is nettils. But keep you a guid hert in ye, for Ah’s tak ye on ma back an flie wi ye ti that verra keep. An whan Ah hae ye thare, byde you outby or ye see the ettin weill on his road awa ti the huntin!”

In nae tyme at aw the aigil haed Callum on its back an flew awa wi him til the ettin’s keep. Thare he set the lad doun, for ti wait or the ettin soud set out for the huntin. Atweill, it wes a geyan lang hing-on. But at lang lest, the ettin gaed his gait, doun inti the derk forest. At aince, Callum cam creepin oot frae whaur he’d been dernit, an he keikit inti the keep bi this winnok an bi that, till, at lang lest, whit soud he see, throu the tottiest winnok the back o the keep, but his bonnie lassie, sittin greitin at hir pinglin wark, tryin for ti spin frae a mukkil haep o nettils? Whit ither wad he dae, but burst open the winnok an sklim inti the chaumer asyde hir.

Thay war fair gled ti see ither, Ah can tell ye. But Ah dout we haena cum til the guid endin yit! Ferr frae it. For this ettin haed a guidwyfe! He haed that: a wyfe as hie as the heichest tree in the forest an fullie as ugsum as the ettin himsell. An did *she* no cum ti see whit ailed Catriona as suin as she coudna hear the birrin o hir spinnin jennie? She did juist that, an whit did she finnd but the braw Callum, staunin comfortin his bonnie lassie an hechtin ti tak hir sauf awa hame.

But for aw she wes ugsum, the ettin’s guidwyfe hae a kynd bit aboot hir, tae, an she wes rael vext for the lassie an hir jo, whit wi thaim fleitchin at hir even on ti lat thaim awa in peace. Sae at lest she said ti Callum:

“Aweill, Ah’ll help ye. Ah wes a bonnie quyne aince masell, cum ti think on’t. But no yit a whyle! First ye maun dae ae thing for me, ma bauld laddie.”

“Mercie, Ah’ll dae onie mortal thing ye want,” said Callum. “Oniething ava, sae lang as ma lassie gangs free wi me i the end.”

“Tak tent, than,” said the ettin’s guidwyfe. “An mynd you weill whit Ah say. The’r ae thing ma hert greins for, an that is a string o paerls. Big an braw thay maun be, for ti luik weill on a heich bodie lyke masell. You git me that an ye sal hae yeir bonnie lassie awa free wi ye. But no till than---! Never heed ma guidman! Ah’ll dael wi him!

Ai, deirie me! Whaur wad yung Callum finnd siccan a thing as a string o paerls for the ettin’s guidwyfe,. An him but a sempil fisher lad? He didna richt ken, but he wesna gaun ti lat on ti hir. No him! Sae he juist smirtilt at hir an said:

“Shuirlie ma leddie, that soudna be ill ti dae. Ah’ll awa for the paerls at aince, an leeve Catriona in yeir guid haunds, for Ah’m weill shuir that a kynd wumman lyke yeirsell wul be guid til hir.”

An wi that he gaed his wey back til his houss on the forelaund bi the mukkil sie, an the craiteurs o the sie that he lykit sae weill cam inti his mynd. Amang thir, the neirest til his hert, war the otters that pleyed an soumed aboot in the warld's wattirs. Thay war that smert an clivver, thay soud shuirly ken monie a ferlie that he kent naething aboot.

Sae Callum socht oot the otters, whyle thay war lauchin an daffin wi delyte in the derk puils atwein the rocks, an dyvin deep doun inti the sie itsell. An he spak wi thaim an telt thaim awthing that haed befawn, an whit he maun dae afore Catriona nicht win free frae the ettin

The otters liftit thair faces til him an lippent weill til his wurds, an whan aw wes telt, the grettest o the otters spak, him that wes the heid otter, lyke:

“We can help ye, sae we can, brave lad that ye ir! For we ken weill aw the kinriks o the sie an thaim that leeves in thair pailaces ferr ablo the swaws. Ah hear tell that ye ir cannie an kynd til aw the beiss in this warld, an for us it is but a smaw thing that ye ir speirin. Sklim up onti ma back, nou, an cum you wi me, an we sal see things an steids mair ootlin nor dreams!”

Sae it wes that Callum sklam onti the otter's back, an the otter soumed wi him intil the wyde sie that keltert in the wunds o the warld. Doun an doun thay gaed, deep throu the green wattirs, an deeper nor that, till whaur soud thay cum but til the land at the verra boddum o the sie itsell, whaur bydes the sie fowk in the kinrik o the Gret Sie Keing? An shuirly here wes a place o bewtie. For the war flouers an fremmit plants o monie culors, reid an purpie, yallae an blue, airtin thairsells this wey an that in the souchin o the wattirs. An the war pailaces o merbil, o rose-pink coral, an o coral that wes as whyte as a snaw-flake, wi thair touers an turrets glinkin in the saft emerant licht o this unco place, ferr, ferr ablo the warld's wattirs.

Syne, whit soud the otter dae but thraw aff the coat o saft fur he wure onlie in the places whaur the human kynd bydes, an he stuid nou afore Callum as the son o the Keing o the Warld-at-the-Boddum-o-the-Warld's Wattirs.

“Cum you nou, Callum,” said the Sie Prince. “Cum you wi me. Ah wul tak ye ti ma faither, for shuirly he wul hae paerls aneuch for ti mak a string for the ettin's guidwyfe, an shuirly he wul help ye ti free Catriona. He wul that, Ah can promise ye.”

Wi that, the Sie Prince brocht Callum intil a mukkil chaumer in the graundest o aw the pailaces, whaur sat the Keing o the Sie Fowk an his thrie dochters asyde him in aw thair bewtie. An richt fair war the lassies. But Callum thocht o nocht but his Catriona an o hou he nicht spier for help frae the Gret Keing.

The Sie Keing sat quaetlyke, an he lippent til aw that Callum haed ti tell him. An whan he haed haird aw, he said:

“Pit you yeir feirs ahint ye frae this meinit, brave lad that ye ir. Ah hae paerls aneuch, ay, an rowth o treisurs forby, shuirlye! Man, hae Ah no the wale o the paerls o aw the warld’s wattirs, an sairvants for ti fesh thaim soud Ah want thaim? Ye need never mismak yeirsell, for gledlie wul Ah help ye.

An wi that, he sent his auldest princess ti open the biggest o his treisurs, tellin hir ti fesh ben the mukkil necklace o saft glisterin paerls she wad finnd lyin thare. The auldest princess taen the gowden kie frae hir faither’s haund an gaed awa ti dae as she wes bidden. But as she gaed, she said til hirsell:

“Whitna peitie that sae braw a lad soud gae back til the warld o men! For Ah wad be richt gled o him for a man for masell. Ah coud shuirlye gar him forget the lykes o a wee spinnin quyne! Ah hae awthing that he coud ever want an mair, sae Ah hae. An til this meinit, Ah hae never set een on oniebody Ah nicht loue!”

An she thocht an thocht whit thing she nicht dae, for ti catch the fisher lad for hirsell.

Sae it wes, that whan she cam back til hir faither, the auldest princess cairrit owre hir airm the mukkil necklace o saft-glisterin paerls, an it skinkilt lyke muinlicht on the quaet wattirs o the sie. An in hir twa haunds, she heild a sie-shell, pink as a rose, an wi haunils o baeten gowd. First she raxt oot hir airms ti Callum, sae he nicht tak the paerls frae hir. An this he did, pittin thaim sauf awa, wi his hert fou o pleisir an gledness. Syne the auldest princess haundit til him the rosie sie-shell, fou wi a sowp o deep purpie wyne.

“Drink!” says she, “for ye maun be drouthie an forfochen o bodie, eftir aw yeir traivel!” Ye hae yeir paerls sauf nou, sae drink, for ti freshen yeirsell!”

But weill did Callum ken that a human durstna tak cup nor murlin gin it be offert bi the fairie fowk that bydes in the green knowes o his ain kintrie. For than, he nicht never gae back til his ain fowk, but maun byde foraye wi the wee fowk. But Callum didna think o the Sie Fowk as fairies at aw. Richt aneuch, thay war selkies or otters whan thay cam lauchin an daffin amang the skirrievaigin rivers an on the siller saunds bi the sie’s edge, but thay war shuirlye no fairies? Thay war but craiturs that haed ae maik for the land an anither for the Sie Kinrik. An for aw, thay war his freins, an he wes mukkil behauden til thaim.

Sae Callum raxt oot his haund for the shell an he wauchtit doun the purpie wyne wi a gled hert. But whan he haed drukken it, he luikit about him lyke a man new-waukent in anither warld, an it an unco ane. For fient a thing coud he mynd. Naething o Catriona. Naething o the ettin an his guidwyfe. Naething o aw his traivels throu the deep wattirs. Naething o the string o paerls. Naething ava!

Eftir a whylie, the Sie Keing offert Callum the auldest princess for his wyfe? He did juist that, for she haed loued Callum sen ever she first saw him. Sae it cam aboot that a day wes set whan Callum, aye forgettin aw the years an places nou ahint him, wes gaun ti mairrie the Sir Keing’s dochter.

But haud on....! The end o this yairn is no yit! The war ay Catriona, an hir sittin spinnin nettils for the ettin. An on a gowden day o simmer sun, whit soud the ettin's guidwyfe dae but send oot Catriona for ti dae hir spinnin bi the wattirsyde, sae that she nicht breithe the caller air, an hear the burds liltin amang the shaws.

Sae thare she sat, hir lane, spinnin awa, an thinkin o hir brave lad, Callum, an wunnerin whaur he nicht be. Haed he forgotten about hir? Coud he no mebbe finnd a richt necklace for the ettin's guidwyfe? Whaur wes he that he didna cum back til hir?

Syne, for a wee, Catriona pat by hir spinnin an sat tuim-haundit, watchin the wattir rinnin doun an awa ti the ferrawa sie. An here she saw a mukkil saumon restin asyde a stane? It cam inti Catriona's mynd that the saumon wad aiblins hae seen Callum, an nicht gie hir wurd o him, sae she spak ti the saumon an telt him the haill storie. She did juist that, an mair forby. Syne she gied the saumon a threid o nettil ti tak ti Callum, gin it nicht faw that the saumon wad meet up wi him in sum ferrawa steid. Shuirlye, gin Callum soud git the nettil threid, he wad ken in his hert that Catriona greined for his return, even an he didna bring hir hir freedom.

The saumon taen tent til hir, an syne, turnin back doun the wattir, he soumed on his gait ti the gret sie, takkin wi him the nettil threid in his mou. Til awbodie he fell in wi, the saumon spak o Callum, spierin gin the craitors o shore or sie haed haird tell o him? But for lang, it seemed, naebodie haed wurd ti gie. But at lest, whit soud he meet but an otter, plowterin amang the blek rocks in the sunshein? An the otter said:

“Callum the fisherman, is it? Mercie, Ay---! Fyne Ah ken him, for aince, a whyle back, did he no lowse me, an me sair fankilt in a net? An Ah can tell ye hou ane o ma freins bure that same Callum on his back ti the Warld-at-the-Boddom-o-the-World's Wattirs, whaur the Sie Keing is lord, sae that the Keing nicht finnd paerls for Callum. Mynd ye, Ah kenna whitfor Callum soud want siclyke whigmaleeries!”

But the saumon lowpit for pleisir in the gret wattirs, an says he ti the otter:

“But Ah ken whitfor, ma brither. Ah ken whitfor! Ma thanks ti ye, an nou Ah maun gang ti that same Kinrik, for the'r a thing Ah maun dae.”

Sae the saumon soumed awa fell fest, an here did he no cum ti the Sie Keing's kintrie juist at the stert o the waddin feast that wad mak Callum an the auldest princess man an wyfe? Strecht ti Callum gaed the saumon, still beirin Catriona's nettil threid in his mou. An he gied the threid o nettil inti Callum's luif, for weill the saumon kent that glaumerie canna byde whaur the'r as mukkil as ae wee nettil.

An in that verra saicont o tyme, Callum myndit aw things past. An lyke a man waukent frae a lang dwam, he saw the Sie Keing sant awa, his sons an dochters wi him. Nae langir war the sie bairns; nae langir war the sie flouers in thair unco brichtness; naither war the touers an pailaces o coral, rosie or snawflake whyte. Aw war gaen in a glisk, leivin nocht but saund an stanes an the gret tuim wattirs o the sie, an the saumon aye asyde him, the paerls in his poutch.

Syne the saumon spak ti Callum an said:

“Pit yeir airm aboot ma shouthers, brither, sae Ah micht beir ye up throu the green wattirs o the sie ti the place ye cam frae!”

Sae Callum did juist that, an he wes a blyth man that day. Fell fest the saumon soumed an i the hinner end, set Callum doun on the forelaund o his ain place. Fell fest Callum traivelt throu the derk forest an awa up the heich hill whaur stuid the ettin’s keep. Nor did he gang in or he haed seen the ettin gae awa til the huntin.

But whan Callum did gang inby, whitna graund walcum he gat! The ettin’s guidwyfe taen frae him the string o glisterin paerls, an leuch for jey at the sicht o it. Syne she luit Callum awa free wi his bonnie Catriona, an the perr o thaim bade thegither, blyth an mukkil content til the end o thair days, sae thay did.

